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ABSTRACT

A stylistics-based approach to teaching poetry in the English as a foreign language classroom is examined. Since students may not have the linguistic skills to appreciate a poem, an analytical framework is proposed that includes the elements of repetition, confusion, and surprise. Reference is made to two poems, "In a Season of Unemployment" (Margaret Avison) and "Political Meeting," (A. M. Klein) which are appended. Repetition occurs on all three levels of language: phonological, lexical, and syntactical. At the phonological level, there may be repetition of any segment of a word. At the lexical level, repetition of single lexemes may occur, as well as repetitions of lexemes with common semantic features. At the level of syntax, there are many examples of syntactic structures being repeated in parallel (items of the same class occuring in the same places in the same sentences). The element of confusion is used to illustrate the ways in which poets fuse elements that are separate in conventional use, or separate elements that are unitary in conventional use. In addition, poets often surprise the reader with unusual or unexpected combinations. A stylistic study of literature can enable students to see the way language is used to express situations unconventionally and can develop in students sensitivity to the communicative potential of language. It is suggested that this approach makes literature an integral part and natural extension of language learning. (SW)

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REPETITION, CONFUSION AND SURPRISE:
A STYLISTICS BASED APPROACH TO
TEACHING POETRY IN EFL CLASSROOMS

Gail Kingwell

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From "English Literature for EFL," Working Documents 2

Department of English as a Foreign Language, Univ of London Inst of Education

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the minds of the public, the teaching of English is firmly identified with the teaching of literature, especially with the teaching of the "great" writers of the English language. However, changes in education and social conditions in the last three decades have undermined the status of the study of literature. As teachers have placed more emphasis on the acquisition of communicative skills, (skills which were assumed to develop naturally in traditional teaching) there has been less emphasis on literature study and more on the study of English language.

This is true in classrooms for native English speaking children and is even more marked in EFL classrooms. A glance at any standard text-book on teaching English as a foreign language confirms that literature has been almost discarded in favour of the development of various communicative skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing. In two recently published texts, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (Broughton et al 1978) and A Practical Guide to the Teaching of English as a Second or Foreign Language (Rivers and Temperly 1978) the word "literature" does not appear at all in the table of contents. In the index "literary appreciation, study" and "literature, study of" are listed. But a look at the page references shows that literature is only briefly mentioned and teaching techniques are not discussed at all. There is a somewhat reluctant recognition that some EFL teachers will be obliged to teach literature as part of a syllabus leading up to exams in secondary schools. It is admitted that "Literature does not have to wait for advanced knowledge of the language" and that "Even the most elementary learner can derive pleasure from traditional rhymes and riddles ... or from simple but aesthetically complex poems." (Broughton et al 1978, p. 114), but there are few clues about how to teach it.

It is generally assumed that the study of literature is best postponed until late secondary or tertiary level in EFL contexts. There are, of course, sound reasons for these assumptions. Traditional foreign language teaching which concentrated on the study of literature led to an emphasis on written over spoken forms of English. Written language established the norm - not only was it written language, but "literary" language, and there are still some (fortunately rare) teachers who

teach EFL students to recite Shakespearean sonnets and feel that they are teaching English! It goes without saying that students, whether EFL or native English speaking, must learn to communicate using normal, conventional spoken and written English, not the English of Shakespeare, Dickens or even of Ted Hughes.

There are additional problems in EFL classrooms. The language used in literature, or in any example of "authentic" writing, is uncontrolled. Vocabulary is not specially selected, nor is syntax modified to suit the level of particular students. The difficulty of decoding too much unfamiliar language could be discouraging for a student who is struggling to learn the language and could certainly have a negative effect on his attitude towards it. Usually too, the learner's linguistic competence (in the foreign language) is at a much lower level than his intellectual and emotional development. He possesses concepts and a sophistication in his own language which cannot be expressed or understood in the foreign language. Language which is easily decoded may be intellectually insulting and uninteresting. When one considers poetry in a foreign language, the difficulties often appear even more insurmountable. Poetic language is characterised by ambiguity and compactness of expression and deviates even more from the conventional use of language than other forms of literature. While we may use figurative speech in ordinary language, the figures have often become embedded in the conventional lexicon. Idioms may be "dead" metaphors which have acquired an accepted and conventional meaning, like any other vocabulary item. The figurative language of poetry is the fountain-head of idiom. It is a fresh, unusual use of language and thus requires special interpretive strategies to decode. As with metaphor, so with other characteristic features of poetry such as rhyme and rhythm. It is the unusual (and tiresome) person who speaks or writes in rhyming couplets in order to communicate with those around him.

The EFL teacher, then, is constantly faced with the conflict between the students' potential interest in, for example, the "stories" of the Shakespeare plays and the difficulty which the language of the original presents. Students may have the experience and conceptual development to appreciate a poem, but not the linguistic development. One solution has been to present students with simplified versions of stories, novels, plays, etc, but these versions may leave out much that

is essential. In fact, what is usually discarded are the very elements of freshness of expression that make a piece of writing a piece of "literature".

Another solution has been to study "bits" of novels or stories. While this may be desirable at some stages in the students' education, the value of such "bits" is derived, in large measure, from their relationship with the whole novel or story, and divorcing one part from the whole reduces its significance. (See the essay by Guy Cook in this collection.)

It is not surprising then, that literature has been, if not discarded, at least regarded as a fossilized remnant of an outmoded philosophy of education. Faced with the difficulties of teaching literature, is there any reason to re-introduce it into an already overburdened EFL syllabus? A resounding "yes" sounds from teachers, tired of repetitive drills and the endless task of "creating" situations in which authentic language can be used - teachers who often have come to the teaching of English through a personal enthusiasm for literature. Teaching English literature may have a seductive appeal for teachers, but what does it have to offer the EFL student in Nigeria or Japan?

The most compelling arguments for teaching literature in EFL classrooms have been discussed by Widdowson (1978). He proposes an approach to literature teaching based on stylistics, which complements and extends the teaching of communicative skills. His approach emphasizes that literature is an example of language use and that studying it from this point of view develops in the student "a sharper awareness of the communicative resources of the language being learned". (Widdowson 1978, p. 83) He advocates comparing literary discourse with other conventional discourse. By comparing the way in which language is used in various forms of discourse, the student gradually develops an insight into the way language is used for communication. He learns to recognise conventional use of the "code" and compares this to the deviant way "code" is used in literature.

Teachers of literature have traditionally relied on students making a spontaneous, intuitive response to the language of literature. The term "native speaker intuition" has been applied to a native speaker's sensitivity to the fine shades of difference in meaning which is the

basis of literary appreciation. Intuition is defined as "immediate apprehension by the mind without reasoning; immediate insight". However, the sort of intuition which allows someone to respond to poetic language is not something one is born with (unless we can interpret Chomsky's LAD to mean Literary Appreciation Device)! It is the product of massive and constant exposure to the language in all varieties and situations. That is just what the EFL student is lacking. Part of the task of the EFL teacher, therefore, is to begin to build up a basis for response and, if possible, to develop a capacity in the student to respond in his own way, not in the way a literary critic cum teacher says he must.

Anything consigned to a page, in written form, is unreal in a sense - it is taken out of the context of the real world and re-created with words. The scientist must write with precision and accuracy concerning procedures, results and hypotheses so that other scientists can duplicate the procedures, compare the results and challenge the hypotheses. The journalist must report, more or less objectively, a situation or experience so that his readers have accurate information. The literary writer also writes with precision to create a context, characters, emotions, or situations; but what the writer creates cannot be "checked" against any objective reality, it exists only through words on a page. To "get at" the reality, the student needs to be able to understand how the words are used in relation to each other to mean what the writer intended them to mean.

Non-literary writing usually refers to some external reality which can be examined or understood outside the language used to describe or comment upon it; but literature is dislocated from the material world. This dislocation necessitates certain conventions of language use which are unique to literature. It is these conventions to which students must learn to respond if they are to begin to enjoy literature. If students can enter an imaginative world where people interact and communicate in a variety of situations and registers, where they use authentic language in every conceivable form, teaching literature then, can become a way of teaching language, and it is a way which exploits the young person's natural interest in people and their feelings and ways of life, their adventures and mishaps and enables his imagination to begin to reach outside the narrow boundaries of his individual life.

2. REPETITION, CONFUSION AND SURPRISE: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

To understand or "decode" language it is, of course, necessary to first understand the code. Discussion of any piece of literature presumes that the students understand what the words denote, or assumes, at least, that there are not too many unfamiliar words in the text. The analyses, however, should yield a better understanding of the "connotative" meaning of the words, as well as enabling students to compare the way the literary writer uses code with conventional use. Teachers have traditionally used technical, critical terms such as "metaphor", "simile", etc when analysing meaning. Students are neither critics nor linguists, however, and such terms add additional burden to the learning load of the student. John Haynes (1979) lists the drawbacks to the traditional approach as follows:

(1) It encourages a belief that the meaning and style of a poem are disparate, tenuously connected things and thus it gives a misleading idea of what the full meaning of a poem is;

(2) The non-technical description of meaning normally fails to provide students with any method of interpreting the poem for themselves;

(3) The technical discussion of language and style is difficult for students to assimilate because there are a large number of un-English sounding terms and because these terms do not form a coherent system;

(4) The technical language is not appropriate for the beginner; it suits the advanced reader who already knows how to read a poem, but wants to <u>classify</u> his interpretation.

Haynes then goes on to discuss an approach to analysis which "combines maximum coherence with minimum jargon" and which takes repetition in poetry as a unifying concept. I would like to propose two additional elements as necessary for analysis, for which I will use the terms "confusion" and "surprise". Reference is made to the two poems attached in the Appendix.

A. Repetition

Repetition occurs on all three levels of language - the phonological, the lexical and the syntactical. At the phonological level there may be repetition of any segment of a word. Familiar examples include:

a) alliteration - repetition of initial consonant phoneme
   e.g. painted, park
b) consonance - repetition of final segment
   e.g. cemented, planted
c) assonance - repetition of medial vowel segment
   e.g. black, bands
d) rhyme - repetition of everything except initial phoneme
   e.g. hall, tall
e) repetition of the same class of sounds
   e.g. the plosives in verse 1, Avison (Appendix A)

At the lexical level, repetition of single lexemes (e.g. the repetition of "planted" in Avison, verse 1) may occur, as well as repetitions of lexemes with common semantic features (e.g. "cemented" and "planted" both contain the feature "solidly fixed to the ground"). Lexical repetition may also occur in the form of synonyms, or repetition of items from the same lexical set, or from the same root.

At the level of syntax, there are many examples of syntactic structures being repeated in parallel; that is items of the same class occuring in the same places in the same sentence. For example, in Klein,1.31, we find:

"praises the virtue of being Canadien,
of being at peace, of faith,
of family."

with repetition of prepositional phrases, all introduced by "of".

Repetition in poetry may be deliberately used by the poet and is one of the ways in which poetic language differs from the conventional use of code. One of the effects it has is to bring the repeated elements firmly into the perceptive field of the reader/hearer. It is a form of redundancy which ensures understanding. For example, the repetition of the lexemes "weightless" and "weightlessness" (Avison 1.20 and 1.33) makes us understand the importance of that

concept; it acts to emphasise in a way that stress in spoken language focuses our attention on an important word.

Repetition also establishes relationships between chunks of language which might not otherwise be related in our minds. The parallel syntax "of being Canadien, of being at peace, of faith, of family", bring the items "Canadien", "peace", "faith", "family", into a relationship of equality.

Repetition, then, is a cohesive element in poetry binding items together which are disparate in the code and bringing important elements to the attention of the reader/listener.

B. Confusion

By "confusion" I mean ways in which poets fuse elements which are separate in conventional use, or they separate elements which are unitary in conventional use. For example, in poetry the form of the poem constitutes part of the message, whereas in conventional use, form and message are separate. In Klein, verses 7 to 10 constitute a single sentence. The reader is led on almost without pause until the climactic point is reached with the question "Where are your sons?". This question introduces a new note into the poem and the 11th verse ends abruptly on that new note. The syntax signals the change and the form of the message represents information - whereas in conventional discourse the form merely conveys information.

At the phonological level the nature of the sounds contains information aside from the usual information conveyed in the language code. For example, in Avison, verse 1, the heaviness and breathlessness that is conveyed in the code is further heightened by the repetition of plosives.

"Confusion" also occurs in conjunction with repetition. The repetition of structures, sounds and words sets up equivalences which do not normally exist in the code. Thus, the previously cited example (of "Canadien", "peace", "faith", "family") the semantic fields of these words overlap because they occur in a repeated, parallel structure. The poet arranges the words so that we perceive a relationship between them which does not normally exist. Why should this be so?

The human mind is an organising principle. Presented with an amorphous jumble of stimuli from the external world, it imposes categories and meaning. Seeing the following words on a news-stand billboard:

MAUDLING IS DEAD LEYLAND REBELS CAPITULATE

we begin at once to try to "make sense" of them. We assume, perhaps, that because these words appear together there must be some relationship between them. All but philosophers would reject the combination: Maudling is. Dead Leyland. Rebels capitulate. However, seeing the words DEAD and REBELS in close conjunction, we think that perhaps Maudling's death was caused by the rebels, or that his death triggered the capitulation of the rebels. We see words in conjunction with other words and we suppose a relationship. It is only when we know the objective reality behind the words that we realise that this group of words comprises two statements which, in fact, are not related: "Maudling is dead. Leyland rebels capitulate." and we realise that the "rebels" are not the kind who might inflict death.

In literary use, the semantic fields of words may overlap, so that "meanings" which are peripheral or potential in the code, become central in the context of the piece of literature.

"Confusion" occurs also when categories (such as animate-inanimate; living-dead) with discrete boundaries in the code become fused. And things which appear as single entities in conventional use may become multiple entities in a poem. For example, the "sender" and "addresser" of the message in the usual communicative situation are one person. In poetry, first person pronouns often represent a dual entity, the poet (as message sender) and another being within the poem who is the "addresser".

In In Season of Unemployment we shall see an instance where confusion arises because of uncertain pronoun reference. In the code personal pronouns usually refer to the most immediately preceding noun. In the poem, however, the reference is ambiguous; boundaries become blurred and identities become fused.

C. Surprise

The characteristic of poetic language which I call "surprise" is described by Leech as the "phenomena of defeated expectancy" (Leech 1969 p. 119). Our knowledge of conventional language use enables us to predict that certain sounds, words and structures will occur in conjunction with certain other sounds, words and structures and that certain others will not occur. Thus, if we hear the sounds /pr/ we know that the next sound will not be /s/ since this combination of sounds does not occur in English. Similarly, we see/hear the word "addled" and we expect the next word to be "egg" or "brain" but not "streets".

Poets often surprise us, however, with unusual or unexpected combinations. For example, in Klein, 1.11, we see "Fall the feathers of ..." and where we might expect to see "the bird" we find instead "sound". This unexpected deviation from the code forms the basis for metaphor and other traditional figures of speech. Not all such deviations are relevant; some may have a trivial or unintended meaning, but others are deliberate and meaningful in the context of the poem, because there is some latent relationship in the code between the expected (but missing) element and the unexpected one used by the poet. In the above example one looks for similarities between "sound" and "feathers". The deviant item acquires meaning by its relationships with other items in this particular context.

The above example is an example of paradigmatic deviation which depends on the existence of a closed set of possible choices. That is, in conventional use, there are only a few words which could be used to complete the phrase "feathers of ..." and "sound" is not one of them. The poet has extended the boundaries of the closed set to include "sound".

Poets may defeat our expectations by setting up a pattern within the poem itself, then interrupting that pattern unexpectedly, finishing a sentence before we expect it to be finished, or, by the opposite device, extending syntactic structure after we expect it to be finished. An example of the latter is the long sentence previously cited in Klein (11.19-33) and in 1.36 a sentence is finished and then completely changed in meaning by the addition of one word, "maybe".

All of the elements in this analytical framework are inter-related. "Confusion" may occur because items are repeated in slightly different contexts. We may be "surprised" that a sentence does not finish when we expect it to do so because it is extended with a series of parallel structures. We cannot say that there is a unique relationship between any particular type of deviation and a particular meaning. Items acquire meaning within the context of a particular piece of literature and that meaning exists only for that context.

So, we cannot say to students, for example, "Repetition of voiceless plosives means breathless atmosphere." What we can do is help students identify the conventions and begin to interpret them.

A stylistic study of literature, upon which this analytical framework is based, fulfills two purposes. It can enable students to see the way "language is used to express a reality other than that expressed by conventional means" (Widdowson 1975, p. 80) and can develop in students sensitivity to the "communicative resources" of the language. As Widdowson says, "The purpose of literature as a subject ... is not to provide information about the particular piece of literature in the syllabus, but to get the learners to recognise how these particular pieces exemplify more general principles of communication." (op.cit. p.85)

Approached in this way, literature becomes not an addition to an over-crowded syllabus, but an integral part and natural extension of language learning.

3. ANALYSIS AND TEACHING TACTICS

(The poems analysed appear in the Appendices)

A. In a Season of Unemployment Margaret Avison (Appendix A)

1. Analysis

Repetition occurs on several levels in this poem and is the main element of "deviant" use of language. If we consider first the phonological level, it can be observed that there are 47 occurrences of plosive phonemes, /g b p k t/ in imitial, medial and final positions. Plosives

are characterised by a sharp, explosive release of breath. The repetition of sounds, by itself, has no significance. If we look at some of the lexical items which contain these plosives we find:

1.1 green painted park benches
1.3 planted
1.4 sparrows go
1.5 dust baths
1.6 park maple's shadow
1.7 bench, cemented down, planted
1.8 cemented
1.9 not-breath
1.12 midnight
1.13 bricked in
1.14 stifling dark

The lexemes planted, cemented, bench and maple all contain the semantic feature "immobile, immoveable". The lexemes not a breath, bricked in, stifling, all contain semantic features of "some constraint on the breath, difficulty breathing." and the lexemes, shadow, midnight, and dark, all contain the feature "absence of light". There is a repetition of semantic elements, highlighted by repetition of plosives (predominantly voiced and in single syllable words) and this all combines to create the feeling of immobility, breathlessness and darkness in the first two verses.

The repetition of planted in conjunction with benches connotes "rootedness and immobility", particularly when cemented and cemented down are added to the description of the benches at the end of the first verse. The semantic field of the lexeme park bench overlaps and merges with those of planted and cemented, giving connotations of immobility. The park acquires the characteristics of stifling, bricked in, dark. There seems not to be a breath of life in the park. There is, however, a tree. From the form of the genitive the park maple's shadow instead of "the park maples' shadow(s)", we understand that there is only one tree. The tree also contains features of "rooted" and "immobile". In the shadow of that tree the birds go on having dust baths . Dust contains the features "non-living, dry" adding to the picture of a place devoid of life. The use of the verb go on

indicates continuing action, as if they have been having dust baths forever. The effect is as if a cine film had stopped in mid-frame, freezing all action and indication of life in the picture of the park.

Quite a different picture can be created by re-writing the first verse, eliminating many of the features just discussed:

> These yellow benches are
> all new. The Park Commissioner arranged
> them here.
> Orioles are
> having baths at the edge of
> the maples' shadow, just where
> the bench is placed, arranged
> and then rain-washed.

Lines 11 and 12 suggest a contrast with the "here" of the poem, but it is in a sense a negative contrast. Seeing the phrase "Lapland sun at midnight" one would think of a weak, cold light. Yet in the poem it is contrasted with "stifling dark". What usually connotes a weak light takes on, in the context of the poem, the meaning of light contrasted with dark.

In the third verse we begin to see how the poet has used the element of "confusion" as defined in the analytical framework. A man is placed on the bench. Now all the connotations previously associated with "bench" fuse with the man. This is further enhanced by the word "steady" (1.17) (+ immobile). All the lexemes "planted", "cemented", "(not) moves", "bricked in", "stifling" and "steady" relate to the park, the bench and the man.

The following words all occur in verse 4: "astronaut", "weightlessness", "scatter", "ray", "quick". These all contain the feature <u>movement</u> - in contrast to the words in the first two verses.

Further "confusion" begins to emerge in line 21, with the possessive pronoun "his" (bench). We would expect, in normal discourse, to look back to the noun immediately preceding the pronoun to find the reference for "his". In the poem, the noun most immediately preceding

"his" is "newspaper-astronaut" (1.18). However, seeing "his" associated with "bench", we must assume that "his" refers to the man on the bench. This is the first indication of the fusion of the identities of the man on the bench with the astronaut - a confusion of identities and reference. The next two pronouns encountered are "him" (1.25) and "he" (1.27). Again, the most immediate preceding noun is "astronaut" and from the context they seem to refer to the astronaut; but these references are also ambiguous, as they could be referring to the "his" of "his bench".

Various deictic markers in the poem place the poet in the park where he can see the man on the bench. We have "these" (1.1), "this newspaper" (1.10), "here" (1.12), "that bench" (1.15), all pointing to things within sight of the poet. The poem is written mainly in the present simple tense, which lends immediacy to the description of the man in the park. Knowing this, when we read "I glance across at him" (1.30), we assume that "him" refers to the man on the bench. We then see the words "feeling excellent", "weightless" and "smiling". The first use of these words was in reference to the astronaut (11. 19, 20 and 28). Their repetition in reference to the man on the bench identifies him further with the astronaut.

Exploring the connotations of the word "weightless" we find that the dictionary defines "weight" as "degree of downward tendency in body produced as resultant of earth's gravitation and centrifugal force", but also "importance, influence" (as in the expression "carry weight" - to be influential, important). "Weightless" could refer to absence of gravitational pull, as with the astronaut, but also to lack of importance, without influence, in reference to the man on the bench.

An interesting ambiguity arises from lines 21-24. We have already noted the confusion surrounding "his" in line 21. "Black" and "hollow-air" have features of <u>absence of light</u> and <u>stillness</u> respectively. "Ray" is selectionally deviant (we might expect "move out") and it suggests a movement as fast as the speed of light. The lines may suggest thought waves moving from the man to the astronaut, indicating a wish to get out of the stifling, airless situation he is in. But, the movement ceases - he cannot get out of his situation.

The poet has hyphenated ra-dio in lines 28-29, perhaps to emphasize a phonological similarity to "ray" (radio waves = thought waves). The radio, however, carries a report of the astronaut. The phonological resemblance of "ray" and "radio" further confuses the identity of the astronaut and the man.

The immediate presence of the man on the bench noted earlier is contrasted with the "removedness" of the astronaut. He is always at second-hand: he is a "newspaper-astronaut" (like a paper tiger?) and is observed by "ground observers" who are earth-bound. They watch him on T.V., not in person. The astronaut is further removed from the present because the only use of the past tense is in reporting what he said.

2. Teaching Tactics

The main thing for students to note here is how the poet uses the elements of repetition and confusion to create a context and to fuse the identities of the man on the bench and the astronaut. This could be done through the use of "judicious questions".

(a) Where is the writer of the poem?
The student would note that he is in a park. With guidance they should notice the markers "these", "here", "that", etc., all indicating that the poet is in the presence of the man on the bench.

(b) Find words which refer to the benches.
Students would note "planted", "cemented", then try to decide what characteristic these words might have in common and with bench (immobility).

(c) In verse two, what words are used to describe the park?
The students would note here the words mentioned earlier which indicate lack of air, stillness.

(d) Note the sounds /g k b p d t/. Make the sounds and decide what they have in common. How many times do these sounds occur in the first two verses?
Here students would discuss the characteristic explosive release of air and associate this with the breathless feeling of the park.

(e) What common characteristic do the following words have: benches, maple (tree), cemented down, planted, (not) moves, bricked in, stifling dark?

Students would probably note a common feature of stillness, rootedness, immobility. Relate this to the park.

(f) What person is associated with the words in the previous question? How?

Note here the placement of the man on the bench in the context of the park.

(g) Find some words that mean the opposite of immobile, heavy.

Students should find "weightlessness", "astronaut", "scatter", "ray".

(h) What person are these words associated with?

Note fusion of man on bench with the astronaut.

(i) Look at the pronoun in line 21, "his". To whom does this refer?

Note ambiguous reference and the "confusion" which results.

(j) Look in the dictionary and find two meanings of "weightlessness" which could be used in this poem. What might be the significance of the title?

Students will note that weightless can mean "without importance" and that there could be one meaning of the word describing the astronaut and another describing the man on the bench.

B. Political Meeting A M Klein (Appendix B)

1. Analysis

A context is created within the poem, but perhaps a word about the real situation which prompted the poem would be useful. Camillien Houde was a politician in Quebec, active from 1929 until his death in 1958. He gained notoriety primarily for his opposition to the conscription of French Canadians into the Canadian Army to fight in World War II. He considered the war to be an English war and felt that French Canadians should not be forced to fight in it. He was interned from 1940-44 for his defiance of the National Registration Act.

An example of "confusion" occurs in the first line of the poem with the occurrence of the word "draping" which usually refers to something inanimate (e.g. fabric, clothing) in conjunction with "they wait". "Wait" requires a subject which is +animate. There is a fusion of animate and inanimate characteristics in the pronoun "they". In conventional use pronouns function anaphorically, i.e. derive value retrospectively from a preceding noun. The "they" in 1.2 has no previous nominal to which to refer. In literary contexts, however, it is common to find pronouns functioning cataphorically, referring to a following nominal. Looking ahead to find a noun we find the following pronouns: "their faith", 1.3, "all", 1.4, "someone", 1.8, until finally in line 9 we find "the crowd", the first noun to which "they" can refer. Looking further we find a series of third person plural pronouns, "their", 1.19, 1.22, "themselves", 1.22, "them", 1.29. The "crowd" is the nominal reference for all of these pronouns. In expressions such as "They should do something about the unions", "they" refers to no-one in particular, an anonymous entity, without specific identity. The series of third person plural pronouns in reference to the crowd has something of the same effect here, making the crowd non-specific and "faceless".

The element of "surprise" occurs in line 2, with the clause "they wait the chairman's ...". We expect the next word to be something like "appearance", but find instead "praise" and "glass of water". This suggests that the crowd is thirsting for the Chairman's praise.

A similar deviation occurs in line 7 with "The hall is ...", where we expect to find, perhaps, "noisy", "full" or "cold" and find instead "jocular" which conventionally modifies a + human noun. The noun it modifies here is "hall", non-human and inanimate. The hall and the crowd (+ human) become blended, blurring further the boundaries between animate and inanimate, and depersonalizing the "crowd" even more.

Blurring of semantic boundaries occurs again in line 5 with "equivocal absence is felt". Ordinarily "felt" cannot be used in conjunction with "absence". "Absence" thus becomes concrete and palpable, but still equivocal. The poet compares the absence of the clergy to a breeze, a movement of air which is physically perceptible, but not seen. The clergy then is absent but present, felt but not seen.

"Confusion" arises in lines 8-11 with what, in critical language, is called a metaphor. In metaphors words take on meanings which they do not normally have in the code, although there is always a potential in the code for those meanings. I will follow the method outlined by Leech (1969) for analysing metaphor in order to see how the poet fuses the literal (conventional) meaning with the figurative (potential) meaning.

(Note: Alouette is a popular French Canadian folk song about a lark (alouette), which has acquired some of the characteristics of a national anthem.) To analyse, we first separate literal (L) from figurative (F) use of language and write each out on different lines. Each line should eventually make its own literal sense.

The underlined portions indicate where gaps have been filled in and ditto marks indicate portions which both lines have in common.

1. 8	F.	suddenly someone		lets loose upon the air							
	L.	" "		begins to sing							
1. 9	F.	the ritual	bird	which the crowd in			snares	of	wire		
	L.	" "	song	" " "			bursts	"	singing		
1.10	F.	catches and plucks		throat, wings and little limbs							
	L.	sings		line after line							
1.11	F.	Fall the feathers	of	the bird	like alouette's.						
	L.	Fade the notes	"	sound	of the alouettes.						

It is now possible to discern what similarity exists between figurative and literal use. The song the crowd begins to sing is about a bird (alouette). It is a ritual song in that it symbolises French Canadian unity and identity. The feathers of a bird float lightly in the air and the notes of a song float through the air. The lines of this particular song list various parts of a bird (throat, wings, etc.) and continues with many repetitions of the word "alouette". One can imagine some primitive ritual in which a bird is ceremonially dismembered (caught and plucked).

Lines 12-14 also contain a metaphor. This one depends for effect on a phonological similarity between three words: "oratoire" (Fr.) and

"oratory" (Eng.) meaning chapel, and "orator" (Eng.) meaning speaker. The same process of analysis yields the following:

1.12	L.	The chairman	now is charming, full of asides and wit,									
	F.	The sculptor	begins to work									
1.13	L.	introducing	his	orator	and	silencing						
	F.	building	"	oratory	"	chipping off						
1.14	L.	the	heckling	people	interrupting him	in the hall						
	F.	"	grotesque	gargoyles	popping	" " "						

The image of the chairman is fused with that of a sculptor. Both are preparing a place of worship - the sculptor an oratory and the chairman is creating an atmoshphere in the hall where the orator will be worshipped by the crowd. The sculptor removes (chips off) the gargoyles which profane the chapel and the chairman silences ("cuts off") hecklers who try to disrupt the worshipful atmosphere of the hall.

The comparison of the hall to a place of worship is extended in lines 18 and 19. "Orator" is capitalised and made into a proper noun in the same way that references to religious figures are (for example "the Saviour" in reference to Christ) and, in line 19, we are told that the orator is "worshipped and loved", words that would usually refer to a religious figure. In line 22 we are told "he is their idol", an idol being defined in the O.E.D. as "image of deity used as object of worship".

Verses 7,8,9 and 10 comprise one sentence beginning with "worshipped" in line 19 and ending with "kin" in line 29. The santence consists of a series of complements, all of which refer to the orator and describe his personality and performance on the stage of the hall. The complements could be arranged in a substitution table as follows:

He	is	worshipped loved their favourite visitor a country uncle with sunflower seeds in his pockets full of wonderful moods tricks imitative talk their idol like themselves	
		not	handsome snobbish of the Grande Allée
		un homme intimate informal gallant	

The complements are syntactically equivalent and acquire in the context of the poem a semantic equivalence because of the way they are arranged in parallel. There is a fusion of the syntactic and semantic equivalences to create an impression of the personality of the orator. The verb "is" occurs only twice; the relative absence of the verb and the combination of phrases repeated in succession gives the impression of the orator revealing his personality with rapidity and skill. One gets the impression of watching a magician performing sleight of hand tricks to entrance his audience (note the phrase "full of wonderful moods, tricks and imitative talk.") Other verbs used in the extended sentence, "grins", "jokes", "slings (slang)", "winks" (with folklore), also give the impression of a performer. By describing the orator in these terms the poet makes his audience take on characteristics of children being entertained.

"Wink" in line 28 is a collocational deviation - the element of "surprise" in literary expression. In the code, "wink" refers to a rapid closing of the eye. In the poem it refers to the way the politician speaks; we

transfer the elements of quickness, associated with the word to the way the politician is speaking and we understand, perhaps, that folklore is as natural to him as winking an eye.

Line 29 concludes the long sentence with the verb "has", used in the possessive sense, implying that the audience is in the possession or control of the orator. Line 30 begins a new sentence and with the new sentence the mood changes. This change is also reflected in the use of the word "calmly" - calm being in opposition to the carnival-like atmosphere which was previously built up. Line 30 also contains "therefore", a conjunct of result, implying that as a result of his performance and of his being in possession of the crowd, he can introduce a new topic - war.

The use of parallel syntax occurs with the structures:

	begins to speak of war		
He	praises the virtue of	being	Canadien at peace
		faith	
		family	

The poet thus equates being Canadien with being at peace, with faith and family, then poses the rhetorical questions "Where are your sons?" (l.33)

Being English is opposed, in the next verse, to being Canadien and is, therefore, opposed to the virtues of peace, faith and family which were associated with Canadien. The word "clever" here takes on a perjorative flavour, especially when contrasted with the way the crowd apparently sees themselves. They identify themselves with a man who is "a country uncle", "not handsome", "not snobbish", etc. We have then the image of the crowd in opposition to the English, who are "clever", but cleverness is not a quality which they appreciate.

The occurrence of the question "Where are your sons?" in parenthesis around the verse which refers to the English, suggests that the English

have something to do with the disappearance of the sons of Canadiens.

Verse 12 is chopped into four syntactical units, in contrast to the long rollicking sentence of description which has preceded it. The short syntactic units mime the hesitancy with which the orator speaks and the uncertainty of the sentiments he expresses. The uncertainty is further underlined by the use of the attitudinal disjunct "maybe" (1.36). Attitudinal disjuncts normally (in the code) appear in initial position and its final position in the poem emphasizes the degree of doubt which the orator is expressing and focuses our attention on his equivocation.

The crowd in the hall remains a faceless entity to the end of the poem, becoming increasingly child-like in our minds as we read the description of their reaction to the orator. They are contrasted with another group of people, the crowd outside the hall (1.15). The "dark" street is contrasted to the "yellow light" of the hall; the crowd outside views the orator as a "scarecrow thing" - not a favourite visitor, a country uncle, or an idol. The street outside is "flowered" with faces. "Flowers" could be asscciated with passive, quiet, various shapes and colours. In the final verse, the poet returns to the crowd outside the hall. The faces no longer resemble flowers, but are "shadowed and grim" and we no longer have the plural form "faces" but the singular "one face". The change from plural to singular form could indicate a growing unanimity of opposition to the orator (an example of confusion, i.e. fusion of form with message). The crowd outside is contrasted to the one inside; the one inside is Canadien, not English. The contrast could indicate that the one outside is English and hence the reference to the last line to "race". The conjunction of "body-odour" with the word "race" indicates the rising of racial hatred between English and French, outsiders and insiders.

2. Teaching Tactics

Questions which would lead students to a recognition of the way language is used in a "literary" way would be necessary for a complete understanding of this poem. The technique of analysing a metaphor would, I think, be particularly useful in EFL classes. However, another interesting exercise here would be comparison with other

styles of writing, in particular, a comparison with the way a political meeting is reported by a journalist. I have chosen for this purpose a report of a political meeting which appeared in the "Daily Telegraph" on 25th April 1979 (Appendix C).

Comparisons between the poem and the newspaper report can be made at several levels - by comparing the language used by poets and journalists in reporting similar phenomena; by a discusssion of the language used by politicians and its effect on their audience; and by discussing the effect of non-linguistic symbols used by politicians (music, visible symbols of group unity). For the purposes of this paper I will try to limit discussion to the first type of comparison, i.e. a comparison of the language used by poets and journalists.

1. Both the poet and journalist are reporting about a political meeting. Look at the verbs used in the newspaper clipping (disregarding those in the direct quotations). What tense is used?
   (Students should note that the journalist uses the past tense form throughout e.g. "had", "was piped", "was accompanied", "pointed out", etc.)
   What tense is used throughout the poem and what effect does it have?
   (The poet uses the present tense, which has the effect of making the reader feel that he is actually present at the event being reported.)

2. Underline all the personal pronouns in the newspaper clipping and in the poem and find the nominal reference for each pronoun.
   (A discussion should follow, noting the following characteristics of the pronouns used:
   In the newspaper, third person pronouns appear in reference to Mrs Thatcher (she, her) and to the crowd in the hall (they), but most notably they occur in reference to the Labour party - the opposition. First person plural pronouns appear in direct quotations of what Mrs Thatcher said (we,us, our). No first person pronouns appear in the poem because there are no direct quotations and the poet remains an outside observer. This enables him to make statements such as "(he) knows now that he has them" (l.29). He is both an outside observer, but also is "inside"

the orator, knowing what the orator thinks. Nowhere in the newspaper report does the reporter indicate that he knows what goes on in the mind of Mrs Thatcher. While seeming to be "inside" the orator's mind, the poet still uses the third person pronouns - he is outside and inside. In the same way, he is outside and inside the hall - describing both places at the same time. Again, the newspaper reporter describes only what he can see inside the hall.

3. Compare the following:

from the newspaper:	- "Mrs Thatcher has a standing ovation."
	- "they like the message"
	- "(she) got a more appreciative and enthusiastic response"
	- "she got the audience nodding their heads"
from the poem:	- "(he is) worshipped and loved"
	- "he is their idol"
	- "(he) knows now he has them"

(The reporter reports what he observes, the poet interprets the observation; the reporter must use more neutral words.)
What would be the effect if the reporter wrote the following?
"The audience love Mrs Thatcher and listen with adoration to everything she says."

4. Compare the way the poet and the journalist tell us <u>what</u> the politicians say:

<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>Poem</u>
- Direct speech "they all have the same aim" etc.	- "goes for the balloon, his opposition with pins"
- "Where are the Keir Hardies"	- he "winks with folklore"
- "promising to squeeze the rich until the pips squeaked"	- "slings slang"
- "he would play his own tune at rehersals"	- "informal"
- "not only did he squeeze the rich - but all of us"	- "intimate"
- "got the audience nodding their heads"	- "full of tricks, imitative talk"

The journalist uses direct speech - "She said ..." etc, to tell us what Mrs Thatcher said. The poet never quotes directly, but tells us "how" the politician said, rather than " what".

5. The journalist says "It was a gathering of the faithful" (paragraph 6) How does the poet say the same thing?
The poet uses the form of the language to deliver the same message i.e. the capitalization of Orator, comparison of hall to chapel and use of the word "worshipped" all indicate that it was "a gathering of the faithful", but it does not directly state it.

6. Both politicians use music to create an atmoshpere of group unity. How is this reported in each case?
The poet uses metaphor and the word "ritual" to indicate that the song has a special meaning for the group. The reporter reports the objective fact that Mrs Thatcher was piped in by a patriotic song, but does not indicate in any way that it might have a special ritual purpose.

7. Both politicians stress the importance of certain values, such as "family". How do the reporter and the poet tell us this?
The reporter, in paragraph 10, reports directly what Mrs Thatcher has said, but also notes the values of "non-linguistic" symbols.
The poet reports indirectly what the politician has said and by the use of parallel syntactic structures equates the virtue of certain values with the identity of the Canadiens. This is another example of the poet using form to convey message.
The "form", i.e. syntactic structure of the newspaper report, does not convey the message - the words convey the message through their semantic content.

In the poem the meaning of the word family acquires meanings it does not ordinarily have. It is placed in context with the words "Canadien", "peace", "faith" and acquires some of its meaning from these other words. It is opposed to "war" and "English" and acquires meaning from this opposition. The context of the poem convey s a message, which does not happen in the newspaper report.

4. CONCLUSION

A linguistic description is always a partial attempt at describing meaning, of showing how language works in a particular piece of literature. Because a linguistic description attempts to show how chunks of language relate to each other and to conventional use, it is a particularly valuable approach in the EFL classroom. One cannot equate linguistic details and literary "meaning", but one can begin to build up an understanding of the way in which context affects word meanings. An awareness of the elements of "repetition", "confusion" and "surprise" in literature contibutes to the students' insight into language in its variety of forms.

Roger Pearce, justifying a linguistic approach to literary criticism writes:

"Linguistic analysis becomes an integral aspect of the process of understanding literature, a means of formulating intuition, a means of objectifying it and rendering it susceptible to investigation and, in so doing, a means of feeling out and revising our initial interpretation."

(Pearce 1977, p. 87)

In EFL contexts, a linguistic analysis works the other way around; it becomes a means of acquiring intuition, which is a necessary part of "knowing" a language.

APPENDIX A

In a Season of Unemployment

These green painted park benches are
all new. The Park Commissioner had them
planted.
Sparrows go on
having dust baths at the edge of
the park maple's shadow, just where
the bench is cemented down, planted
and then cemented.

Not a breath moves
this newspaper.
I'd rather read it by the Lapland sun at
midnight. Here we're
bricked in early by a
stifling dark.

On that bench a man in a
pencil-striped white shirt
keeps his head up and steady.

The newspaper-astronaut says
'I feel excellent under the condition of
weightlessness.'
And from his bench a
scatter of black bands in the hollow-air
ray out - too quick for the eye -
and cease.

'Ground observers watching him on a TV
circuit said
At the time of this report he
was smiling,' Moscow ra-
dio reported.

I glance across at him, and mark that
he is feeling
excellent too, I guess, and
weightless and
'smiling.'

Margaret Avison

APPENDIX B

Political Meeting

FOR CAMILLIEN HOUDE

On the school platform, draping the folding seats,
they wait the chairman's praise and glass of water.
Upon the wall the agonized Y initials their faith.

Here all are laic; the skirted brothers have gone.
Still, their equivocal absence is felt, like a breeze
that gives curtains the sounds of surplices.

The hall is yellow with light, and jocular;
suddenly someone lets loose upon the air
the ritual bird which the crowd in snares of
singing

catches and plucks, throat, wings, and little limbs.
Fall the feathers of sound, like alouette's.
The chairman, now, is charming, full of asides and
wit,

building his orators, and chipping off
the heckling gargoyles popping in the hall.
(Outside, in the dark, the street is body-tall,

flowered with faces intent on the scarecrow thing
that shouts to thousands the echoing
of their own wishes.) The Orator has risen!

Worshipped and loved, their favourite visitor,
a country uncle with sunflower seeds in his
pockets,
full of wonderful moods, tricks, imitative talk,

he is their idol: like themselves, not handsome,
not snobbish, not of the Grande Allee! Un homme!
Intimate, informal, he makes bear's compliments

to the ladies; is gallant; and grins;
goes for the balloon, his opposition, with pins;
jokes also on himself, speaks of himself

in the third person, slings slang, and winks with
folklore;
and knows now that he has them, kith and kin.
Calmly, therefore, he begins to speak of war,

praises the virtue of being Canadien,
of being at peace, of faith, of family,
and suddenly his other voice: Where are your
sons?

He is tearful, choking tears; but not he
would blame the clever English; in their place
he'd do the same; maybe.

Where are your sons?
The whole street wears one face,
shadowed and grim; and in the darkness rises
the body-odour of race.

APPENDIX C

'Scotland The Brave' for Mrs Thatcher

By Ann Morrow

1. Mrs Thatcher, on her first night in Scotland, had a standing ovation when she spoke in Edinburgh. She was piped to the tune "Scotland The Brave."
2. The Tory leader, who was accompanied by her husband and her daughter, Carol, attacked "the extreme Left-wingers" dominating the Labour party.
3. "Whatever name they choose to operate under, they all have the same aim. It is to destroy our present society in the hope that their brand of extremism will clamber to power on the wreckage," she said.
4. "They want to build a State in which the freedom of the individual is utterly destroyed and his every action, including his choice of job, home or school, is supervised by bureaucracy."
5. Warming to her theme, Mrs Thatcher pointed out that "at election time that all goes underground."

Welcome message

6. The meeting was being held in Leith and the hall was packed with people wearing large blue rossettes. It was a gathering of the faithful, but they liked the message. Mrs Thatcher wanted to know: "Where are the trumpeters proclaiming the socialist cause? Where are the Keir Hardies and the Nye Bevans?
7. There was Mr Denis Healey promising to squeeze the rich until the pips squeaked. But not only did he squeeze the rich - but all of us.
8. Then Mr Anthony Wedgwood Benn was mentioned. But, said Mrs Thatcher with a smile, "he would play the wrong tune at rehearsals and go his own way. No wonder they wanted to keep him off the bandstand until the concert is over."

Family values

9. Mrs Thatcher got a more appreciative and enthusiastic reception last night than at most stops in the campaign. She departed quite often from the original text of her speech and got the audience nodding their heads when she referred to a government "tottering towards bankruptcy and forced to go on their knees to the International Monetary Fund."
10. When she stressed the appeal of the "old-fashioned family" and its values, it was given extra emphasis as Mr Denis Thatcher and her daughter sat behind her.
11. She said: "We will take no lectures from the Labour government on unemployment." She asked the audience where had all the promises of a caring socialist society gone?
12. Finally, Mrs Thatcher drew on one of her favourite poets, Kipling. Her voice, with just a hint of huskiness, ended the when she recited his poem beginning "When the World is Asleep ...".

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